

CAB 16/232

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- + Conclusions of the Sub-Committee requested to consider how a secret service bureau could be established in Great Britain.
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The Committee had before them a proposal by the General Staff which served as a basis for discussion.

2. They consider that any secret service Bureau that may be established should be separate from any of the Departments but must at the same time be in close touch with the Admiralty, the War Office and the Home Office.

3. The objects of the Bureau would be :-

- (a) To serve as a screen between the Admiralty and War Office and foreign spies who may have information that they wish to sell to the Government.
- (b) To send agents to various parts of Great Britain and keep touch with the country police with a view to ascertaining the nature and scope of the espionage that is being carried on by foreign agents.
- (c) To act as an intermediate agent between the Admiralty and the War Office and a permanent foreign agent who should be established abroad, with the view of obtaining information in foreign countries.

4. The Committee are of opinion that great need exists for the establishment of a bureau having the above objects. It is customary in Foreign Countries to protect the Government from being convicted of any dealings with spies by using a secret service bureau as an intermediary. Foreign attachés and other Government officials are by this means not brought into contact with spies, and no direct evidence can be obtained that the Country is having any dealings with them. In Great Britain no such organization exists, though the want of it is frequently felt

+ see proceedings of the 2nd Meeting of the sub-committee of the Committee of Imperial Defence on espionage, 20th. April, 1909.

felt and the present arrangement which involves constant changes in the officers who deal with secret service in the Admiralty and the War Office, prevents any continuity of system from being established.

5. The Committee understand that our organization for acquiring information of what is going on in Foreign Ports, and more especially in foreign dockyards is defective and that this is particularly the case regarding Germany where it is difficult to obtain accurate information. The whole of our machinery for this kind of work is in need of reorganization and this can best be done by bringing it into connection with the secret bureau.

6. The Committee therefore recommend that we should have a permanent agent at some place like Brussels in touch with the secret bureau. He might be the medium through which other British foreign agents sent in their reports, such a course being less likely to excite suspicion than if these agents communicated with Great Britain direct.

7. Between a British foreign agent and the department for which he is collecting information there would therefore be two screens, viz:- the permanent agent at Brussels and the secret service bureau in London.

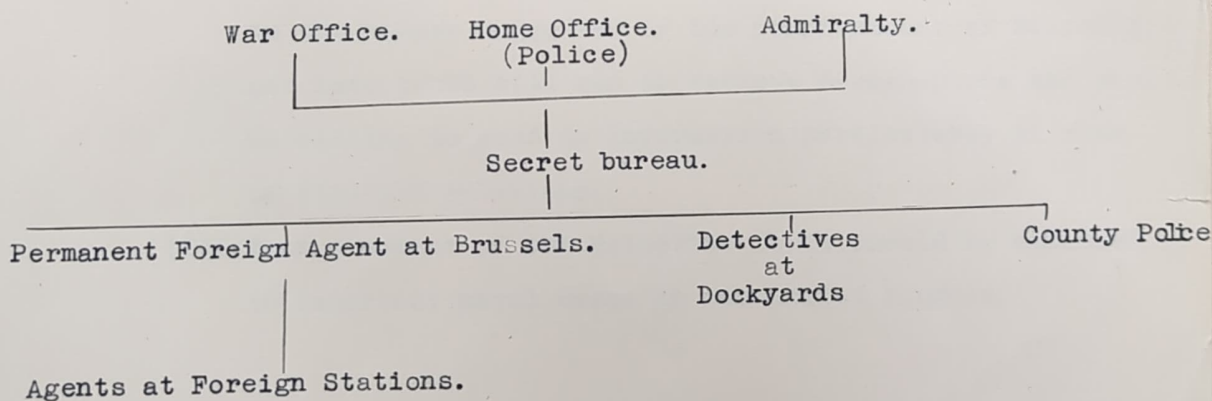
8. The Committee consider it advisable that the bureau should have on its staff a retired officer of the navy and one of the army, possessing a knowledge of foreign languages. These would have sufficient technical knowledge to enable them to determine the value of the evidence that they obtained from abroad and whether it was sufficiently important to pass on to the Admiralty or the War Office.

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9. They are of opinion that, in accordance with a suggestion made by Sir E. Henry, the service of a firm of private detectives should be utilized in the formation of the bureau. Some such firms exist in London presided over by ex-members of Scotland Yard who can be thoroughly trusted and might no doubt be glad, in exchange for a small Government subsidy, to manage the bureau and to have the assistance of the two naval and military officers mentioned in the last paragraph.

10. They are further of opinion that a member of the detective force should be attached to important naval bases such as Portland, Portsmouth and Plymouth, who, in addition to his duties as a member of the dockyard Police, would keep touch with any foreign espionage that was going on in the place and keep the Admiralty and War Office informed as much as possible as to its extent and scope.

11. Our secret service system would therefore be as follows -



12. Before sending a permanent agent abroad the Committee consider that we should send a member of the detective force to reside in Germany for a few months with a view to his getting into touch with men living at important points in that country who might possibly serve as our agents. In giving this opinion

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the Committee have in view the fact that they are informed by Sir E. Henry that he has a man serving under him who is specially adapted to a service of the nature suggested and has a good knowledge of German. They also agree with the opinion expressed by Sir E. Henry that it is advisable, with a view to lulling suspicion, to send this detective to Germany via America in order that by a short residence in the latter country he may be able to go to Germany as a German-American.

13. The recommendations of the Committee may therefore be summarized as follows -

- (a) That a secret bureau be established in connection with some private firm of detectives recommended by the Commissioner of Police.
- (b) That two ex-naval and military officers should be appointed to it having special qualifications.
- (c) That a permanent foreign agent should be established abroad with other agents acting under him.
- (d) That a specially competent agent should be sent out in the manner suggested by the Commissioner of Police to get into touch with men in various German ports who would be willing to send us information particularly in time of strained relations.
- (e). That a member of the detective force should be attached to important naval bases in the United Kingdom.

14. No accurate estimate of the amount of money required for the secret service bureau can be made, but the following is an approximate forecast.

(a) Subsidy to private detective firm which undertakes the supervision of the bureau . . .	£500
(b) Ex naval or military officer . . .	500 +
(c) 1 " " " " . . .	500 +
(d) 1 confidential clerk, ex-soldier or sailor . . .	150 +
(3) 1 permanent foreign agent . . .	500
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	£2,150
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15. In addition to these amounts there will be travelling and office expenses and pay of agents at foreign stations. For these it is difficult to give an estimate. A portion of the expense would be met by the present secret service vote. A sum of £500 per annum, the pay of a General Staff officer whose service will be required if the present system continues, would also be saved by the establishment of a Bureau. The actual cost of the operations directed by the Bureau will however be a varying quantity dependent to a great extent on our relations with foreign powers and our need for accurate information regarding their ship-building, etc.

2, Whitehall Gardens,

S.W.

April 28th. 1909.

Sd. Charles Hardinge

Sd. G.H. Murray

A.W. Bethell

J.S. Ewart.

E.R. Henry.

+ These sums should be in addition to pension.

